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ABSTRACT

Interviews with 142 college trustees, administrators and faculty leaders investigated attitudes about their presidents' effectiveness and the evaluation criteria expressed. Common dimensions in the assessment of presidents were identified and statistically analyzed. Most interviewees gave their presidents a positive evaluation. The 10 evaluative dimensions used include: (1) willingness to be influenced by others; (2) competence; (3) respect for the culture of the college; (4) encouraging the free flow of information; (5) association with outcomes; (6) involvement; (7) commitment to the institution; (8) leadership primarily through position; (9) appearance, image, and impact; and (10) comparison with the predecessor. They suggest that campus leaders assessed their presidents by the way in which they were perceived to approach power and influence and share the common understandings of the community. The findings confirm that social power and social influence theories of leadership are appropriately applied to leadership in higher education organizations, but point as well to the importance of symbolic, cognitive, cultural, and cybernetic theories. Board members and administrators generally supported their presidents, but faculty were often critical, possibly because of different concerns. Six considerations for the understanding of leadership in a college or university context are proposed, that may help to explain the positions taken by campus leaders toward their presidents. Includes 65 references. (MSE)

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THE EVALUATION OF COLLEGE PRESIDENTS: DIMENSIONS USED BY CAMPUS LEADERS

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This paper was presented at the annual meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education held at the Red Lion-Jantzen Beach in Portland, Oregon, November 1-4, 1990. This paper was reviewed by ASHE and was judged to be of high quality and of interest to others concerned with the research of higher education. It has therefore been selected to be included in the ERIC collection of ASHE conference papers.

THE EVALUATION OF COLLEGE PRESIDENTS: DIMENSIONS USED BY CAMPUS LEADERS

What the leader in any organization can accomplish depends to a great extent upon whether or not followers decide to lend their support (Barnard 1938; Gardner 1986; Scott 1987); it is the followers who decide whom they will follow (Homans 1950). A college or university president, as any other organizational leader, needs the backing of others in the institution. The dependence of leadership on the support of constituents is especially critical in higher education because the governance authority is shared and, therefore, diffused. It is the purpose of this paper to explore the dimensions on which faculty leaders, administrators, and board of trustee members evaluate presidential leadership and come to either lend or withdraw their support.

Leadership in Higher Education

There is no agreement in the research literature as to which of the leadership theories appear useful in understanding the leadership roles of college and university presidents. Some researchers have focused on the characteristics of presidents, a stance consistent with trait theory. Others have stressed that effective presidents remain aloof from other college leaders, look presidential, and do presidential things (Fisher 1984a; Fisher, Tack, and Wheeler 1988) or that leaders are those who make the difference through transformational actions (Baker, Roueche, and Rose 1988). This emphasis on actions of the president is consistent with behavioral theories of leadership.

It has been suggested that presidents must understand the community as a political system where coalitions form and re-form and must work within this movement of power (Walker 1979). Alternatively, Chaffee and Tierney (1988) emphasize the importance of leaders understanding and working within the culture of a particular institution. From a symbolic perspective Cohen and March (1986) assert that serendipity, playfulness, and quixotic thinking hold sway limiting leadership effectiveness in many organizations.

A tension can be noted between those who propose that it is the leaders who primarily make a difference, and those who give weight to the interrelationship between the leader on the one hand and the community, its members and the particular circumstances on the other. The latter group theorizes that interdependence and the resulting reciprocal influence between the leaders and followers take on special significance in leadership in higher education given the shared governance system (Bensimon, Neumann, and Birnbaum 1989; Birnbaum 1988b; Hollander 1987a; Perlman, Gueths, and Weber 1988).

Leadership in colleges and universities takes place within an institutional context that is considerably different from that of most other organizations. Colleges and universities are professional organizations dependent upon expertise and knowledge

(Etzioni 1986). Even so, facilitation and coordination necessitate administration (Millett 1962). However, administration and expertise draw upon different sources of authority. Administrative authority bases its claim of power upon legitimacy for the formal responsibility delegated by a board which is legally responsible for the institution, whereas professional authority draws upon expert power and claims of special knowledge. For the latter the ruling board depends upon the faculty (Mortimer and McConnell 1978; Etzioni 1986). There is a basic tension between structures deriving from such differing bases of authority (Austin and Gamson 1983; Baldridge 1971; Blau 1973). The conflict has led one scholar to go as far as to say, "Administrative and professional authority are not only different, but mutually inconsistent" (Birnbaum 1989a, 39). And yet, in order for the institution to remain viable, both are necessary.

The college "president is imbedded in both authority systems" (Birnbaum 1989a, 39) and faces special problems where demands of efficiency and cooperation demand very different administrative and leadership skills (Scott 1987). The main players in campus governance reflect diverse perspectives and different values and would assumedly vary in their expectations and assessments of college presidents.

The assessment of leaders by followers has been studied in other settings (see, for example, Blase 1987) and yet, in spite of the recent attention to what has been termed a crisis in leadership in postsecondary institutions requiring "strong" leadership (e.g. Bennett 1984; Commission on Strengthening Presidential Leadership 1985), there has been no broad empirical exploration of the bases upon which other campus leaders assess the leadership of college presidents. Instead for the most part suggestions about what factors contribute to college presidents' effectiveness have come from presidents (Baker, Roueche, and Rose 1988; Fisher, Tack, and Wheeler 1988); constituents, who carry out much of the work of the institution, have not been polled. The present study analyzes what <u>constituents</u> mean when <u>they</u> say that the president is a good president.

Methodology and Data

Transcriptions of interviews carried out by researchers as part of the Institutional Leadership Project with campus leaders on thirty-two campuses of varying types were studied extensively in order to find what these leaders had to say about the quality of presidential leadership on their campuses. The colleges and universities represented in the sample had been purposively selected to represent the variety of higher education institutions in the United States (see Birnbaum, Bensimon and Neumann 1989 for a description of this project and the sampling procedures).

The interviews of three categories of constituents from site visits made by the Project in the academic year 1986-87 were selected for inclusion in the present study; these included

members of the governing board, administrators, and faculty leaders. From the available transcribed interviews, up to two in each category at each college were included as available. The campus leaders interviewed included thirty-four members of governing boards (most of whom were the chair of that body), fifty-five vice presidents (nearly evenly divided between vice presidents for academic affairs and vice presidents of administration or business affairs--with two exceptions of other vice presidents), and fifty-three faculty leaders (the majority of whom were either presidents of the faculty senate, or a comparable body, or of the faculty union).The total sample included 142 interviews.

These interviews with campus leaders were systematically reviewed, and portions of the transcribed interviews were considered relevant and abstracted if they shed light on either of the following two analytical questions: (1) Does the person interviewed evaluate the president as a good, mediocre, or poor president? (2) What does the interviewee actually say which indicates either approval or disapproval?

The abstracts were studied first to determine whether that campus leader judged their president to be a good or poor president. The assigned positive or negative ratings were later independently confirmed, and a sampling were subjected to external verification.

The abstracted material was then reviewed repeatedly to ferret out kindred comments in an attempt to find the common threads in the narratives and answer the research question, "What dimensions do these constituents use for evaluating their president?". Like accounts were grouped into successively more abstract, but coherent, concepts (Miles and Huberman 1984; Schatzman and Strauss 1973). The evaluative dimensions were thus grounded in the observations of campus leaders (Conrad 1982; Glaser and Strauss 1967). Once these concepts were identified, content analysis was used to categorize the responses into the identified evaluative dimensions (Holsti 1954; Selltiz, Wrightsman, and Cook 1976). Comments illustrative of the identified dimensions were then broken apart according to the role of the observer and compared to find what leaders with different campus perspectives might share in common or value uniquely as they judged their presidents.

Statistical analysis (including the use of chi square, Cramer's Index of Contingency and the multivariate technique of discriminant analysis) was used, in addition to the qualitative measures, to explore the data further to determine the presence of any additional patterns of relationship among the variables.

Who Sees What?: How Presidents Are Evaluated by Campus Leaders

The evaluative comments of campus leaders about their presidents were studied in order to find whether or not these leaders supported their presidents, to explore the dimensions on which they based their assessments, and to learn whether there

were differences among the assessments of the three groups of leaders. Here are the results.

The Rating of the President. The majority of campus leaders gave their president a positive evaluation: the comments of 105 of the campus leaders (74%) suggested that they rated their president as good, with thirty others (21%) as poor. The seven (5%) remaining, for which it was not possible to detect predominantly positive or negative leanings, were rated as neutral.

Those presidents judged to be good were described using such words or phrases as "extraordinary," "outstanding," "very good," "a good leader," or "the right person for the job." Poor presidents received harsher judgment: "deficient," "should not be president," or "has no credibility." For those difficult to rate, comments were made to the effect that the president was "nice but not well known" or "good as an external leader but not in academic matters."

While the majority of campus leaders evaluated their presidents positively, this was found to vary according to the role of the evaluator, for while board of trustee members and top administrators almost invariably rated their president favorably, faculty leaders were divided in their support (see Table 1).

Table 1 RATING OF THE PRESIDENT BY ROLE

Overall Evaluation of the President	Role of the Campus Leader							
	Board N=34		Admin N=55		Faculty N=53		Total N=142	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Good	30	88%	48	87%	27	51%	105	74%
Poor	3	9%	4	7%	23	43%	30	21%
Neutral	1	3%	3	6%	3	6%	7	5%
Total	34	100%	55	100%	53	100%	142	100%

Chi Square 26.287 4 df p=.00003 Cramer's Index .3042

When evaluating the president favorably, board members used terms like "the best" or "wonderful," administrators, "superb" or "effective," and faculty leaders, "a very good president" or "I can't think of anyone I'd rather have out there." When rating unfavorably, a board member commented that the president was more interested in his or her own welfare than in that of the institution, an administrator noted that the president "has a way to go," and a faculty leader observed, "[the president is] not an educational leader."

Dimensions of Evaluation. Ten evaluative dimensions were identified as the contents of the comments of campus leaders were

repeatedly reviewed in the search for patterns. These dimensions included the following which are ranked in order of mention: (1) willingness to be influenced by others, (2) competence, (3) respect for the culture of the college, (4) encouraging the free flow of information, (5) association with outcomes, (6) involvement, (7) commitment to the institution, (8) a leader primarily through position, (9) appearance, image or impact, and finally, (10) a comparison with the predecessor. The relative importance given each dimension in comparison to the others by campus leaders as a whole and by role is shown in Table 2.

Table 2 DIMENSIONS USED IN THE EVALUATION OF THE PRESIDENT IN ORDER OF OVERALL MENTION AND BY ROLE

Dimension Used in Evaluation	Role of the Campus Leader							
	Board N=34		Admin N=55		Faculty N=53		Total N=142	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1. Willingness to be Influenced	29	85%	47	85%	52	98%	128	90%
2. Competence	27	79%	51	93%	45	85%	123	87%
3. Respect for Culture	23	68%	44	80%	45	85%	112	79%
4. Encouraging Info Flow	17	50%	35	64%	44	83%	96	68%
5. Associated with Outcomes	23	68%	28	51%	40	75%	91	64%
6. Involvement	16	47%	26	47%	31	58%	73	51%
7. Commitment	12	35%	32	58%	27	51%	71	50%
8. Leader through Position	12	35%	16	29%	24	45%	52	37%
9. Appearance, Image & Impact	15	44%	14	25%	23	43%	52	37%
10. Comparison with Predecessor	13	38%	14	25%	20	38%	47	33%

The use of the dimensions, as indicated by the percentage of leaders making mention, varied when the role of the evaluator was considered as can be seen in Table 2. Faculty leaders were more likely than administrators and board members to evaluate their president on the basis of his or her "willingness to be influenced." Administrators mentioned "competence" most often. However, "a willingness to be influenced," "competence," and "respect for the culture" were the dimensions used most often by each of the three groups.

A description of each dimension follows with examples in the interviewee's own words and indications of variation, when identified, among the three constituent groups.[1]

1) A Willingness to be Influenced by Others

Presidents judged willing to be influenced were described as either responsive or unresponsive, interactive or exclusive, and reaching out or reclusive. Faculty leaders more often than not did not perceive a willingness on the part of the president to be influenced, at least, by them.

Responsive. A responsive president was characterized as one who genuinely listened, was flexible and accessible, was supportive of others' ideas and open to opposing views, and was willing to change his or her mind. In the interviewees' words, such a president "is open to my calls . . . very responsive to my requests to talk," "can be persuaded." Negative comments noted that the president, "does not listen . . . does not want to be surrounded by people who will question."

Interactive. Presidents seen as interactive were described as talking with others, actively working with others, and encouraging the practice of participation and consultation on campus ("We are in constant contact," "we meet informally").

Campus leaders described the president as interactive most often in terms of a one-on-one talking relationship ("we get together for breakfast," "we spend a lot of time talking"). Board members and administrators did not make negative comments about such communication; it was only faculty leaders who said "I don't have much contact with [the president]," "[the president] refused to talk [with us] about it."

Reaching out. Presidents described as reaching out were those who actually went directly to groups on campus or who sought out the opinions of others through a process of consultation. Criticism was made of those who did not consult or reach out for divergent opinions. Those reaching out were described as "eager for input," "will stop at your table at lunch." Critical comments included, "[we] asked to see it. Otherwise [the board] would have had little input."

In describing whether or not the president was found to physically reach out, administrators described the president as going out to others ("made a very strong, deliberate outreach effort to the faculty"), faculty leaders noted whether the president came out to meet with them ("eat[s] with the faculty," "communicates via the media . . . never comes up personally to me"), and board members looked for both "coming out" and "going out" behavior ("confers with faculty leaders before [acting]," "has done a . . . good job in reaching out into the community").

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[1] For a detailed presentation of tabulations and statistical results of the data, see Fujita 1990.

(2) Competence

Presidents, when evaluated on the basis of competence, were described as either possessing or not possessing skills or characteristics considered to be necessary or appropriate to the position.

Skills. Skills mentioned by campus leaders ranged from communication and speaking skills, to interpersonal skills, to technical skills. A competent president "can talk on any subject without preparation and sound as if [he or she] knows what [he or she] is talking about" "puts people at ease," whereas in the case of a less-than-competent president, "People don't sit up and listen when [the president] talks" "is a very difficult person to deal with." The skills valued by each group of leaders differed: faculty leaders spoke of interpersonal skills and board members described public relations skills, but administrators spoke of the president's skill to conceive ideas and strategies.

Characteristics or Traits. Members of each leader group spoke with approval of presidents who were intelligent ("the most brilliant person"), decisive ("has a sense of what [he or she] wants"), honest ("has a lot of moral fiber," "I trust [the president] 1000 percent"), personable ("very people-oriented . . . knows everyone's name," "congenial," "likeable"), or who had a sense of humor ("has a wonderful sense of words," "creates an atmosphere of fun"). And they disapproved of presidents who were "slow in considering ideas," "hesitant about making decisions," or not credible ("many times I turn off what [the president] says . . . it's verbiage).

However, while some favored presidents who were confident, determined or aggressive ("tough as nails," "does not show doubts," "demanding," "a [gentleman or lady] but underneath . . . all steel and muscle"), others described positively presidents who were quiet, reflective and thoughtful ("controlled and poised," "has a lot of patience," "not an aggressive, hard-driving person"). One president was criticized for being "passive" and another for being "too frenetic." And one was praised for being "very affable, hardy, back-slapping," while another who was "back-slapping" was criticized.

(3) Respect for the Culture

A president was considered respectful of the culture who made attempts to learn about the college community, sought a place within that community or worked in harmony with the established ways. A president was judged based on whether he or she was thought of as sensitive or insensitive toward the culture, blending into or standing apart from the culture, articulating the culture, and attempting change in line or apart from the prevailing culture.

Sensitivity toward the culture. Presidents who were sensitive to the culture were perceived as wanting to learn about the college and as exhibiting concern for the college, its members and its life. Positive remarks went as follows: "[in a

short time] the president knew more about the place than anybody," "is interested in the nooks and crannies of the campus." Criticisms charged that the president was "not particularly sensitive to the feelings of the community," "[made] changes . . . without learning what things were all about first."

Blending into the culture. Presidents were supported who were low-keyed and able to share the limelight. Positive comments that illustrate this included: "work[s] behind the scenes on behalf of the institution," "[is not] splashy," "[is] not trying to impress people," "a cheerleader . . . does not have to be the person carrying the ball . . . willing to have [the] team in the spotlight," whereas negative comments suggested that the president "wants to lead too far ahead of the rest of the officers," "likes to be out in front of the crowd . . . a lightning rod . . . purposefully makes controversial statements."

Articulating the culture. Presidents were described as respectful of the culture if they had an appropriate vision for the college and gave voice to it. Only faculty leaders noted and found fault when such a vision was absent or unarticulated ("does not seem to have an agenda," "we're not show-cased").

Attempting change from within the culture. Responses to attempts to bring about change, while generally approved of, varied by role. Although faculty leaders expected the president to have a direction for the campus, they were critical of change as a challenge to the culture, a distraction from business as usual. Board members and administrators, on the other hand, appeared to favor change and found it invigorating, viewing it as evidence of the president's concern for the college and desire to enhance the culture.

(4) Encouraging the Free Flow of Information

This dimension describes presidents who either did or did not seek or share information freely, encouraged or discouraged a norm where information was to be shared, were or were not themselves either informed, or valued an informed constituency.

Giving and seeking information. Presidents perceived to be open to information flow were described as seeking and sharing information freely, without controls. They were open to receiving information directly and informally with no conditions rather than solely through given channels, and were perceived to actually nurture sources of information. There was no sense that the information they shared was less than candid. This was in contrast to presidents who were seen as cutting off or limiting their sources of information, withholding information or giving out information which could not be trusted. Positive comments included: "I can call [the president] up about anything . . . [the president] does not make it hard for people to talk to [him or her]." Negative comments suggested that the president "has a very specific window for input," "gets information from a limited group of persons and goes with it."

Regarding whether or not the president allowed information to flow freely past him or her or required that channels be used,

board members and administrators essentially made no negative mention, but faculty leaders made no positive comment ("information must go through small chains" "[the president] is a real gatekeeper to the board of trustees"). Faculty leaders were also critical of the timing of information they received ("We have never seen it ahead of time").

Encouraging a norm of freely sharing information. Presidents were praised who were supportive of an information-sharing norm on campus and encouraging of direct communication. Administrators, however, referred to information sharing within the administration, but faculty leaders on the other hand referred to information passing between the president or the administration and the faculty.

Sense of being informed. Campus leaders wanted to know what was going on, what the president was thinking and whether or not the president was an informed person. Their comments ranged from, "I don't think much could happen without my knowing about it" to "it is almost impossible to know what daily decisions are being made." Administrators and board members felt informed; faculty leaders, however, were as likely as not to express frustration lamenting, "we judge what [the president and] administrators perceive as the top priorities by what they do," "the president and dean have been pushing [a certain policy] and no one knows why."

(5) Association with Outcomes

Presidents associated with outcomes were credited with perceived improvements or blamed for problems; evaluations included either credit or criticism for some general improvement or lack thereof in the college morale or resources, changes in the college image, or changes in the value system. Faculty leaders were more positive in their evaluations of presidents on this than other dimensions, however their comments were often contradictory, with one president faulted for not moving the college beyond the survival mode, while another, acknowledged to have gained substantial funds for new buildings, was still faulted for a lack of leadership on campus.

General improvement. Presidents became associated in the minds of those interviewed with changes which were seen as improvements in either the internal environment (morale, processes, general sense of progress) or in the gaining of resources (financial, physical plant, personnel choices, enrollment).

Changes in image. All groups associated the president with changes in the image of the college ("[the president] has helped give us a name and a reputation"), and the meaning seemed not to vary between constituent groups.

Changes in the value system. Finally, a handful of leaders (four board members, five administrators, and two faculty leaders) noted that there was a change (always for the better) in the value system and that the president should get the credit ("I'm just following the president who turned this whole place

around," "[The president] is able to inspire people to do more than they might do otherwise").

(6) Degree of Involvement

Presidents were seen as involved with the institution if they worked hard, attended functions of the college community and were engaged in their work; they were evaluated according to their willingness to put in long hours on the job, spend time with the people of the college community, or absorb themselves emotionally and intellectually as well as physically in the presidency.

Spending time/working hard. Presidents seen as working hard were depicted as giving an extraordinary amount of time and effort to their job ("[the president] must work 24 hours a day," "is a terribly hard worker"), whereas a president not seen as working hard, "will become impatient if [he or she] has to spend time."

Spending time with the members of the college community. Presidents who spent time with the college community attended or hosted functions and interacted with the community ("is willing to get out of [the] office and participate in the campus and community"), and presidents not perceived as involved were criticized because they spent time in the wrong places--in their office or away from campus ("I don't see [the president] too often").

Faculty leaders appeared to wish for the president to meet or socialize with them; board members described a president reaching out to the external community; and administrators spoke of the president reaching out toward the faculty and going to college functions. In other words, while administrators and board members spoke of the president going out to some other constituency, faculty leaders spoke about whether or not he or she was coming out to them.

Absorbed in the job. Phrases used to describe presidents thought to be fully engaged in the work of the presidency were "thoroughly immersed," "puts energy in." Administrator comments were as often critical as favorable and this is significant in that criticism on their part was rare. Faculty leaders tended to notice when presidents involved themselves in the mundane on campus: "takes care of things . . . clears the trash off [the] campus," "serves others . . will ride [on the vehicles] with the maintenance crew . . . is not inclined to ask people to do things that [he or she] is not willing to do."

(7) Commitment to the Institution

Presidents judged to be committed to the particular college for which they were working were described as caring about the institution, being loyal to its particular mission, and working for its future. Comments ranged from descriptions where presidents either did or did not evidence a dedication to that particular college, attempts to improve or promote the institution, or a vision for the college's future. No leaders

were equivocal when evaluating on this dimension--they either felt their president was or was not committed; this fact distinguishes this dimension from the others.

Dedicated to the college. A president was considered to be dedicated who "places a high priority in the good of the total institution," and lacking in dedication when "the general welfare of the [woman or man] is more important than the welfare of the institution [he or she] leads."

Board member and faculty leader comments in this regard were most likely to be about whether or not the president was perceived to care for the college ("It is like Ronald Reagan. The reason people like him is because they believe he cares about America. Well, we can say about [our president] that [he or she] cares about [the] college"). Administrators were more likely to note that the president shared in the mission of the college.

Improving and promoting the college. Evidence of a president's commitment was also found in his or her desire to improve the college ("[the president] had a great desire to see the character of this institution improved") or to speak on its behalf ("has an intense desire to increase awareness of the institution locally and nationally"). Criticisms were few but are exemplified by the following: "I have approached the president several times with . . . ways of improving the retention of students. I presented . . . an agenda and I went back in six months, [the president] just yawned . . . [and] didn't appear to be too interested."

Vision for the college. Leaders favored presidents who cared for the college's future by planning and dreaming on its behalf ("puts a lot of emphasis on college direction . . . stresses how we should be different from the rest of the system--that we should be academically the best").

(8) Leadership Due to Position

The descriptions of presidents considered leaders "due to the position" they held ranged from comments concerning the responsibility, power or authority accompanying the position to the use of the title itself.

Board members and faculty leaders considered their president to be a leader solely due to position, whereas administrators were more likely to consider the presidents to be leaders in their own right as well as through the position. However, it should be noted that board members and administrators approved of presidential leadership associated solely with position, whereas faculty leaders disdained such a narrow basis for leadership.

Leader through the responsibility of the position. "[The president and other top administrators are leaders because] they have the responsibility to make things go." Only board members and administrators spoke of position in terms of the responsibility which it entailed; faculty leaders did not.

Leader through the power or authority of the position. Leadership was often evaluated through the power and authority held by the president as through decision-making power. Faculty

leaders were most likely to speak of position in terms of the power entailed in the position.

Leader through title of the position. "The people with the titles [are leaders]. The President above all." Board of trustee members, more than others, talked about the presidents as leaders due to the centrality which came with the title rather than either power or responsibility.

(9) Appearance, Image, and Impact

One of the less often used dimensions concerned the appearance of the president and the impression the president made on others; comments regarded whether or not the president was respected, instilled confidence, or was impressive.

Respect. Evaluative descriptions by the campus leaders often used the word "respected" when favorable; when critical, their comments were more descriptive: "it is to [his or her] credit that [the president] does not present [himself or herself] as an academic." There was a tendency for board members and administrators to note that the president was respected by others (the community, the faculty), and for faculty leaders to state whether or not the president was respected by them.

Instill confidence. One of the warmest comments from the campus leaders toward a president was that "[the president] has an enormous deposit of confidence. Fundamentally [he or she] has a reservoir of good will." These were the words of a faculty member about a president who enjoyed broad support on the campus. And one of the most chilling comments was also from a faculty member, "There is a deficiency in the presidency . . . When I spoke of a loss of confidence, that reflects [a loss of confidence in] the president." Administrators noticed whether or not other groups (as the board) had confidence in the president, but board members and faculty leaders were concerned with their own opinions, and faculty leaders were most critical.

Impression, image. The president was often held up to an expectation of what a president should be: "[Our president] acts like a president should," "[the president] has all the external, superficial trappings of a leader . . . looks like a president." Board members and administrators tended to be concerned with the impression the president made on others ("nationally recognized" "[is] a president that [is good looking] . . . that the community could be proud of"). Faculty leaders were critical and tended to speak of the impression the president made on them ("I am not proud of [the president] as a colleague").

(10) Comparison with Predecessor

Comparisons were made between the incumbent and his or her predecessor based on perceived outcomes, personal traits and behavior, willingness to interact or be open to others, or on situational factors--with the incumbent almost always compared favorably.

Comparison based on outcomes. Presidents evaluated on this basis were credited with results: "I don't hear anything from

the Chamber of Commerce. I think they are satisfied with what . . . [the president] is doing. Before it was chaos from the standpoint of the community." Board members used outcomes in their comparisons more often than did other leaders.

Comparison based on traits, skills and behavior. "[Our present president] is a very strong leader. [The previous president] was mostly a social president . . . did not have a handle on the college." This basis for comparison was also used more often by board members than by other leaders.

Comparison based on a willingness to interact and be open to others. "The last president was very dogmatic. At faculty meetings, the faculty were told to sit down and shut up, and they could not put things on the agenda. [The present president] was welcomed because of [a] developmental perspective." The comparison between the past and present president based on a willingness to interact and be open was used most by faculty leaders.

Comparison based on situation. The needs of the institution at a given time appeared to dictate what was needed in the presidency and thus drove the assessment in the minds of some campus leaders: "[The past president] turned us around with regard to our financial condition. [This president] continued that and turned us around in our academic position." Such comparisons were usually made by administrators and were usually equivocal, often not favoring one president over the other.

Relating the Dimensions with the Overall Ratings. The dimensions which are identified and described should, if they are indeed the basis on which the evaluations were made, relate to the overall evaluations of the presidents. Findings in this regard are presented in this section along with any variations based on role.

It was assumed that when a president was evaluated positively on a dimension (found willing to be influenced, competent, respectful of the culture, encouraging the information flow, associated with positive outcomes, involved, committed, informal leader as well as through position, positive in appearance, image, and impact, and comparing favorably with the predecessor) this president would also be evaluated as a good president. This was true for six of the dimensions (willingness to be influenced, encouraging the information flow, commitment, leaders through position, appearance, image and impact, and comparison with predecessor); when relating the dimensions one by one to the overall evaluations it was found that there was statistically a moderately strong and significant relationship.[2] The strength of the relationship, however, was weaker for the

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[2] The statistical degree of relatedness is based on Cramer's Index of Contingency; an index of .60 was considered to indicate moderately strong relationship (see Twaite and Monroe 1979, 186-195). Significance was at the $p < .001$ level.

remaining four dimensions (competence, respect for culture, association with outcomes, and involvement).

The analysis was complicated by the fact that the dimensions were not occurring in isolation but in relationship to one another. Discriminant analysis was used to find what dimensions functioning together distinguished best between good and poor evaluations. The seven cases with neutral ratings were eliminated, leaving 135 cases in the analysis (105 were rated good and 30 were rated poor). And, missing data (no mentions) were included since it was possible that incidents of a lack of mention of a dimension may also have formed patterns that would have been impossible to follow manually.

Initially all ten evaluative dimensions were included in the analysis. The results of the discriminant analysis[3] indicated one function which explained 45 percent of the variance in the resultant discriminant scores and accurately placed 84 percent of the cases in the observed (good or poor) groupings. The explanatory power of the resulting function was decreased only slightly by limiting the analysis to the five dimensions with the largest coefficients, including in order: "competence," "a willingness to be influenced," "comparison with predecessor," "respect for culture," and "commitment." The function derived from this analysis continued to explain 43 percent of the variance in the discriminant scores and accurately placed 85 percent of the cases in the observed groupings. When role of the evaluator (trustee, administrator, faculty leader) was then entered as an additional variable in the analysis along with these five dimensions, 52 percent of the variance in discriminant scores was explained, and role was found to be the most instrumental variable.

In order to refine the findings regarding the relationship between the role of the campus leader and the use of the different dimensions in the evaluations of the president, discriminant analysis was performed for each group of campus leaders separately with the following results (illustrated in Figure 1). For board members, the optimal combinations of dimensions (those explaining the most variance) included six which were, in order, "competence," "commitment," "comparison with predecessor," "appearance, image, and impact," "association with outcomes," and "respect for culture." For administrators, the optimal combination of dimensions included four: "competence," "involvement," "association with outcomes," and "respect for culture." And for faculty leaders, the best combination of variables included three: "willingness to be influenced," "respect for culture" and "encouraging the free flow of information."

The conclusion reached is that, for this sample of leaders from thirty-two college and university campuses, the dimensions "competence," "a willingness to be influenced," "comparison with

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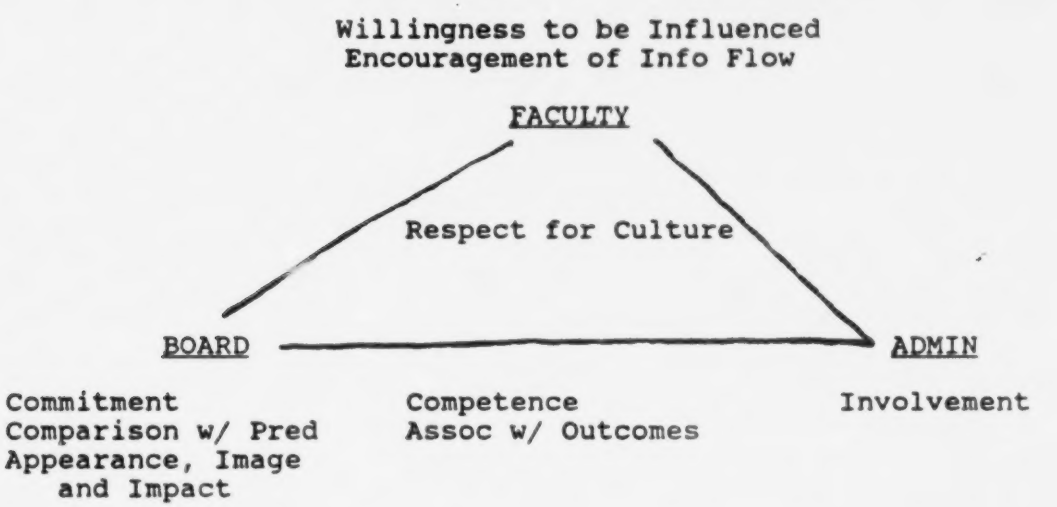
[3] Refer to footnote 1.

predecessor," "respect for culture," "commitment" along with the role of the leader are related to the overall evaluation of the president, with different dimensions in use by different groups.

Figure 1 SHARING OF THE MOST INSTRUMENTAL EVALUATIVE DIMENSIONS BETWEEN THE ROLES



Discussion

This study began with the awareness that presidential leadership in the United States was under fire, and that while some were calling for strong directive leaders, others were theorizing that in higher education institutions, leaders willing to share power were more fitted to the task. It took the approach that constituents of the president were an appropriate group to serve as monitors of leadership inasmuch as their cooperation was necessary in order to get the work of the college accomplished. Using a grounded approach it sought to explore dimensions used by these campus leaders to informally evaluate presidential leadership on their campuses.

Three questions need now to be considered: Why did the majority of campus leaders judge their presidents favorably. Why did these particular dimensions emerge as the basis for evaluation? and, Why did the evaluations and the dimensions used differ according to the role of the campus leader?

Presidents Evaluated Favorably

Three-fourths (105 of 142) of the campus leaders judged their presidents to be good presidents. It may be that by some objective standard this specific group of presidents were particularly good leaders; alternatively, perhaps they were

judged positively as much because the belief exists that in order to become presidents they already had to have been good leaders (Birnbaum 1988a).

Colleges as organizations with characteristics of open cybernetic systems have self-correcting mechanisms, and as such are quite stable institutions; this stability mediates against strong interventionist leadership and accepts competent hard-working presidents, as most are (Birnbaum 1989d). Colleges are also institutions where the participants are autonomous and professional, the work is intrinsically satisfying, and the rewards are outside the leader's control (Birnbaum 1989c). These characteristics typify organizations where, it has been theorized, there is less need for hierarchical leadership (Kerr and Jermier 1978), and presidents who have come through the ranks are aware of the limitations on their powers, and act accordingly (Millett 1978). Further, colleges as institutions where power is dispersed require that influence be reciprocal, and campus leaders in this study perceived that the presidents were, in the main, open to reciprocal influence.

Dimensions of Evaluation. Social power and social influence theories of leadership were postulated at the beginning of this study as particularly important in higher education. It was also hypothesized that interactive rather than directive leadership was appropriate. The dimensions, "willingness of the president to be influenced by others," "respectful of the culture," "encouraging the free flow of information," and whether the president was seen as an official, informal, or formal leader ("leader due to position"), are criteria consistent with these theories.

Other leadership theory suggests that leadership can be understood in terms of the characteristics of the leader (trait theory), what the leader does and whether emphasis is placed on the task or on participants (behavior theory), characteristics of the situation (contingency theory), socially attributed understandings and meanings subject to cognitive limitations (symbolic, cognitive, and cultural theories), and the self-correcting characteristics of organizations (cybernetic theory) (Bensimon, Neumann, and Birnbaum 1989; Birnbaum 1988a, 1988b; Yukl 1989). The dimensions identified in this study can be interpreted using several of these categories. For example, the use of "competence" as a criteria would be consistent with trait theory. Evaluating the president on the degree of "involvement" in the work of the presidency (task) or in the community (consideration) would be classified as consistent with behavior theory. The "comparison of presidents with their predecessors," when based upon institutional needs, is consistent with contingency theory.

The remaining dimensions ("association with outcomes," "commitment to the institution," and "appearance, image and impact") identified in this study are consistent with symbolic, cognitive, cultural and cybernetic theories. It could also be

argued that the observed competence of the president, and the basis for comparing the president with the predecessor, depend as well upon the interpretations held by campus leaders.

Symbolic, cognitive, and cultural theories suggest that what we see is dependent upon what we believe, that what we believe is dependent upon values communicated and reinforced within a group, and that these beliefs may be so strong as to serve as substitutes for what we commonly call leadership (Bensimon, Neumann, and Birnbaum 1989; Birnbaum 1988a; Dill 1984; Kerr and Jermier 1978; Pfeffer 1977, 1981; Smircich and Morgan 1982; Weick 1979). Once established, cybernetic theory maintains that this belief system seeks to maintain itself and resists challenges (Birnbaum 1988a; Walker 1979). Because specific understandings of the role of the leader are part of a follower's belief system, a leader's perceived conformity to expectations are important.

The evaluative dimensions identified in this study suggest that, in the main, these campus leaders assessed their presidents by the way in which the presidents were perceived to approach power and influence and share in the common understandings of the community confirming that social power and social influence theories of leadership are appropriate for consideration when researching leadership in higher education organizations, but pointing as well to the importance of symbolic, cognitive, cultural and cybernetic theories. These evaluative criteria derive directly from the nature of higher education institutions as normative professional organizations.

Faculty Leaders Dissent

Board members and administrators supported the presidents, but faculty leaders were often critical. Were these faculty leaders merely complainers? Faculty leaders may have been more open in their responses because they were tenured, and therefore secure in their positions, or because their training and profession require them to be critical analysts. These are possible reasons for their more negative evaluations. Alternatively, these faculty leaders may have been "seeing" different presidents than those seen by other leaders. The belief systems of the different leaders vary, and therefore what they value, and in turn "see," also differs (Kolb 1983; Weick 1979). Campus leaders reach conclusions about events through the particular lenses of their roles and perpetuate these shared understandings through interaction with others in the same role (Bass 1960; Birnbaum 1989b; Festinger, Schacter and Black 1950; Homans 1950, 1961; Pfeffer 1977).

Board, administrative, and faculty leaders represent different concerns. Presidents, it has been found, spend a small proportion of their time involved in academic affairs or in contact with faculty (Cohen and March 1986) and have been criticized for this neglect (Kerr 1984); faculty members, on the other hand, on many campuses have come to feel fragmented, underpaid, overworked, and left out of decision-making (Austin and Gamson 1983; Bowen and Schuster 1986; Carnegie Foundation for

the Advancement of Teaching 1989; Dykes 1968; Floyd 1985; Neumann 1990). So, therefore, while administrators and board members, drawing upon administrative sources of authority and working closely with the president, accepted the president as the legitimate leader and expected him or her to be "competent," "committed," and "involved," faculty leaders expected the president to share power with them as an informal leader, to share information with them, be facilitative, and reach out to them through consultation. The picture which emerges is that of three quite different groups with different sets of values and expectations (Bensimon, forthcoming; Kuh and Whitt 1988; Neumann, 1987).

All, in expecting the president to "respect the culture," reflected the homeostatic characteristic of colleges as cybernetic systems striving to maintain balance (Birnbaum 1988a; Walker 1979). In other studies as well the need to preserve the basic college culture has been found fundamental (Birnbaum 1990; Rice and Austin 1988). Faculty leaders, with professional expertise and carrying out the "work" of the institutions, were especially protective of the culture and resistant to change.

Conclusions

Colleges and universities have many and potentially conflicting purposes. They serve diverse clients. Their "technologies" are unclear, ambiguous, and unstandardized (Cohen and March 1986). They are open non-linear systems which are difficult to coordinate; detecting exact cause and effect relationships are difficult (Birnbaum 1988a). With such complexity, the following considerations need to be taken into account in understanding what happens in them.

1. The cognitive abilities of individuals are limited and subject to bias. Vivid or meaningful past experiences are more available than common ordinary ones, and the need to impose order means things are associated which in reality may have little to do with one another. What is believed affects what is seen (Birnbaum 1988a; Weick 1979; Yukl 1989).

2. Individuals have both needs for self-esteem and social acceptance, and these needs are brought to organizations by individuals. Cooperation among persons based on social agreements is necessary for stable and complex organizations; leaders and followers are dependent upon each other (Barnard, 1956; Friedlander 1983; Homans 1967). Understood in this way "the leader guides the group and is at the same time himself guided by the group, is always a part of the group" (Follett 1918, 229). Faculty leaders, in particular, expect to participate in the leadership function; it must be shared.

3. Culture arises as persons interact and come to share a common view of reality. Cultural theories hold that reality is not something objectively set apart from individuals, but is that

common understanding which results as individuals share their views with one another in the back and forth banter about events (Festinger, Schacter, and Black, 1950); these understandings form the organization's culture (Clark, 1986; Smircich, 1983). Anyone attempting leadership needs to have an understanding of the norms which have developed from these common understandings (Chaffee and Tierney, 1988). The president must "respect the culture."

4. The meanings individuals hold of events often have more impact and value than the event itself. Symbolic theory submits that we seek meaning in our world, and impose meaning where it is not obvious. Actions are interpreted, not just observed. Individuals will, therefore, attribute motivations and outcomes to leaders; "[l]eaders, then, are people believed by followers to have caused events" (Birnbaum 1988b, 144). "Leaders serve as symbols for representing personal causation of social events" (Pfeffer, 1977, p. 104).

5. Individuals in organizations tend to monitor actions and the interpretations of actions and react if limits are breached. Cybernetic theory proposes that organizations open to and dependent upon their environments tend to run themselves and rely on feedback networks to correct any dysfunctioning. As such they are dependent upon the free flow of information, and in an effort to maintain stability, there is resistance to change. The leader is seen as a responsive facilitator of the process who keeps the monitoring system running and in place, intervening only when the necessity arises (Walker 1979; Birnbaum 1988a).

6. Leadership, at least as it is generally understood (one person as the agent, others as targets), is not always very necessary, especially if community members do not "need" a leader in order to be motivated to make their contribution. "Substitutes for hierarchical leadership" theory proposes that in some situations, especially where the work or membership is intrinsically satisfying and work groups are cohesive, the presence of a leader is redundant (Kerr and Jermier, 1978). The "stroking" that comes from the organization or the task "substitutes" for or "neutralizes" the effects of a leader. The role of the leader closely resembles that of facilitation as required in a cybernetic system.

It is suggested that these principles help explain why a large majority of the campus leaders believed their presidents were good presidents, why faculty leaders so often withheld support, why faculty expected the president to share power and why board members and administrators expected the president to be competent, committed, and involved. These axioms take into account the fact that higher education institutions are made up of reflective individuals with psychological and social needs and cognitive limitations who, as they come together, interact and form cultures which in turn govern them.

The results of this study suggest that leadership theories particularly relevant for understanding the dynamics of the working relationship of college presidents and campus leaders include those which acknowledge the reciprocal nature of influence and the need for sharing power and those which emphasize the importance of interpretation and meaning. The results also underscore the necessity of better understanding collective interpretations of the history and events on individual campuses, a direction in higher education research which is gaining momentum at present (Chaffee and Tierney 1988; Clark 1986; Kuh and Whitt 1988; Rice and Austin 1988).

One must conclude from the results of this study that strong directive "one-way" leadership is not supported by campus leaders; instead they expect competent patient leaders who are constantly attentive to relationships and meanings. Presidents need to remind themselves of the importance of spending time nurturing and maintaining relationships on campus--especially with the faculty--and of continually taking the time to understand (so that they can also give voice to) that which is important to the community members.

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